

**VETERANS RURAL HEALTH ADVISORY COMMITTEE**

April 5 – 7, 2022

Zoom virtual meeting

April 5th: 11 am – 2:45 pm (ET)

April 6th: 11 am – 2:50 pm (ET)

April 7th: 11 am – 2:30 pm (ET)

NOTES**Attendees:****Committee Members Present:**

Deanna Lamb, Chair
Joe Parsetich
Marcus Cox
Vanessa Meade
Francisco Ivarra
Keith Mueller
Katherine Miller
Michael Mclaughlin
Lonnie Wangen
Pavithra Ellison

Samantha Solimeo

Carolyn Tuvey

Peter Kaboli

Karla Miller

Phil Welch

Karyn Johnstone

Thomas Garloch

Tonya Lobbestael

Michael Cole

Jessica Bonjorni

Marie Abow

Jeannie Howard

Sergio Romeo

Nancy Dailey

Joy White

Jeff Moragne

Susan Kirsh

Janelle McCutchen

Amber Fisher

Rebecca Stout

Joe Chiovaro

Bret Hicken

Jaime Wilson

Charles Vickrey

Nicole Rice

Ann Hansen

Kelly-Lora Lewis

Megan Schaff Vander-Zanden

Ex-Officio Members Present:

Ben Smith
Kristi Martinsen
Kellie Kubena

Department of Veterans Affairs Staff Present:

Thomas Klobucar, Designated Federal Officer
Judy Bowie, Committee Manager
Anthony Achampong
Sheila R. Robinson
Byron Bair
Matt Vincenti
Kristin Pettey
Sarah Ono
Keith Myers
Ryan Sharpe
Travis Lovejoy
Vince Watts
LaTonya Small



Consultants Present:

Stephen Miles
Elizabeth Schwartz
Jasmine Williams
Natalie Gaynor
Robert Derby

Public Attendees:

Scott Miller, CDC
Shauna Rust, Senate Committee on
Veterans Affairs
Bryce Redgrave, IHS
Logan Lecates, VSO

Andrea Wendling
Mike Shimmens
David Schmitz
Kate Goedecker
Panangala Sidath, CRS
Tony Buratti
Tina Nelson
Matt Patterson, HRSA
Anthony Estelle, BHW-DPSD
Rene Campos, MOAA
Sarah McNichol

**Meeting Objectives**

1. VRHAC will gain increased understanding of rural workforce recruitment challenges and potential solutions.
2. VRHAC will gain the perspective of rural providers on their experiences within VHA and the rural care setting
3. VRHAC will identify topics of focus for fall 2022 meeting.

Tuesday, April 5, 2022

Welcome, Introductions and Meeting Overview

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- Chair convened meeting and reviewed agenda.

Webinar Tools & Instructions

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Reviewed Zoom functions, meeting and facilitation protocols.

2022 Spring Meeting Focus: Rural Workforce Recruitment and Retention

Thomas Klobucar, Executive Director, Office of Rural Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Provided background information on rural health care challenges and Office of Rural Health structure and program portfolio, with an emphasis on rural workforce shortages and recruitment efforts

Panel: Bridging the Rural Provider Gap

Jessica Bonjorni, Chief, Human Capital Management, Veterans Health Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Dr. Peter Kaboli, Core Investigator, Comprehensive Access and Delivery Research and Evaluation (CADRE) Center of Innovation, Iowa City VA Healthcare System

- Provided overview of VHA workforce with an emphasis on workforce development and primary care shortages
- Highlighted staffing turnover and challenges for rural VA facilities regarding turnover rates and primary care shortages in FTE
- Highlighted programs used to address workforce shortages including service agreements, scholarships and education debt reduction programs (EDRP)
- Discussed disparities in care for rural Veterans and the advantages of telehealth, hybrid opportunities, and the importance of recruitment and retention to bridge the rural provider gap

Presentation: The Rural Nursing Experience

Ms. Joy White, Senior Advisor to the Assistant Undersecretary for Health, Veterans Health Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Provided overview of the rural nursing experience and strategies to recruit, hire, train and retain qualified VHA nursing staff.
- Discussed existing enterprise-wide initiatives including a nursing residency program as a strategy for staff retention.
- Discussed how maximizing and expanding telehealth technologies allow VA nurses to reach rural veterans in a highly effective manner
- Highlighted the AIR Report and Commission's goals which include improving primary care access, outpatient mental health care, inpatient and specialty care

Advisory Committee Management Office (ACMO) Update

Jeff Moragne, Director, Advisory Committee Management Office, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Provided overview of the Federal Advisory Committee act requirements and best practices

Wrap Up & Close

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Committee reviewed highlights, concerns and outstanding questions regarding the day's presentations.

Wednesday, April 6, 2022

Welcome, Introductions and Meeting Overview

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- Chair reconvened meeting and reviewed agenda.

Webinar Tools & Instructions

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Reviewed Zoom functions, meeting and facilitation protocols.

Presentation: The Rural Provider Experience

Dr. Susan Kirsh, Acting Assistant Deputy Under Secretary for Health for Access to Care, Veterans Health Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Provided an overview of Mission Act Section 401 goal to improve access to care to medically underserved communities with a focus on primary and mental health care services
- Highlighted the top five medically underserved areas in the country and discussed the issues these areas face as well as the strategies used to address rural care gaps
- Discussed recruitment initiatives to combat challenges from staffing shortages and other hiring and retention issues
- Answered questions about how broadband access and technological hesitancy impact technology solutions and telehealth services

Presentation: Rural Provider Shortage Areas

Dr. Janelle McCutchen, Chief, Shortage Designation Branch, Division of Policy and Shortage Designation, Bureau of Health Workforce, Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Provided an overview of Health Professions Shortage Areas (HPSA) and Medically Underserved Areas/Populations (MUA/Ps)

- Highlighted National Health Service Corps Resources including programs and initiatives for loan repayment and scholarships to foster workforce retention.
- Discussed The State Department's J-1 Visa Waiver program in the context of recruiting health care professions to regional areas and facilities that experience a shortage of health services and providers.
- Highlighted the Health Workforce Connector (HWC) which serves as a free to use hiring platform for facilities to post their open positions.

Presentation: The Rural Interprofessional Faculty Development Initiative

Dr. Rebecca Stout, Project Manager, Rural Interprofessional Faculty Development Initiative, Office of Academic Affiliations, Veterans Health Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Dr. Joseph Chiovaro, Curriculum Director, Rural Interprofessional Faculty Development Initiative, Office of Academic Affiliations, Veterans Health Administration, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

- Provided overview of The Rural Interprofessional Faculty Development Initiative (RIFDI) which aims to promote and expand health professional education in rural areas by providing interprofessional training in rural environments
- Outlined the 24-month program structure and the use of foundational knowledge, direct teaching skills, leadership and professional development to support healthcare providers in rural VA facilities
- Highlighted several experiential projects developed during the RIFDI program including preceptor burnout and diversity, inclusion and equity curriculum
- Answered questions about specific RIFDI projects including creating new interprofessional learning spaces, an interprofessional didactic series to enhance professional collaboration at sites, and further expanding health professionals' education opportunities.

Panel: Supporting the Next Generation of Rural Health Researchers

Dr. Jaime Wilson, DNP RN PCCN-K, Director, Rural Scholars Fellowship Program, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Iowa City

Dr. Karla Miller, MD, Associate Director, Rural Scholars Fellowship Program, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Salt Lake City

Dr. Bret Hicken, PhD, MSPH, Aging Program Manager, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Salt Lake City

Dr. Sergio Romero, PhD, Operations Director, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Gainesville, FL

Dr. Matthew Vincenti, PhD, Operations Director, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – White River Junction, VT

Dr. Travis Lovejoy, PhD, MPH, Clinical Director, Veterans Rural Health Resource Center – Portland, OR



- Provided overview of Rural Scholars Fellowship Program and discussed training project aimed at addressing rural workforce shortage issues and improving recruitment and retention
- Highlighted a Data Mart pilot project with the goal of integrating staff, clinical, and facility data to provide accurate and representative workforce data
- Discussed the VRHRC Gainesville mentorship program as part of the overall center recruitment strategy to expand professional collaboration and resource sharing
- Discussed the importance of research and innovation with special attention on understanding VA workforce challenges and the importance of stakeholder engagement and inter-agency collaboration to aid VA rural workforce initiatives.
- Highlighted the Workforce Study pilot program, a career development program designed in collaboration with Dartmouth Medical School which funds research support for rural health-focused PhD candidates
- Provided an overview of VRHRC Portland's post-doctoral fellowship pilot program that addresses gaps in VA research training pipeline for those health care professionals with a specific interest in working in rural health.

Panel: Research Perspectives of Rural Provider Recruitment and Retention

Dr. David Schmitz, MD, Dr. Verrill & Ruth Fischer Professor and Chair, Department of Family and Community Medicine, University of North Dakota School of Medicine and Health Sciences

Mike Shimmens, Executive Director, 3RNET

Dr. Andrea Wendling, Professor, Director of Rural Health Curriculum, Michigan State University College of Human Medicine

- Discussed the challenges that rural communities face in recruiting and retaining medical professionals.
- Highlighted the need for training in rural areas to improve contextual competence.
- Provided an overview of how 3RNET serves as a job board to facilitate the connection of health professionals across the country to rural health clinics, non-profits and NGOs.

Wrap Up & Close

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Committee reviewed highlights, concerns and outstanding questions regarding the day's presentations.

Thursday, April 7, 2022**Welcome, Introductions and Meeting Overview**

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- Chair reconvened meeting and reviewed agenda.

Webinar Tools & Instructions

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Reviewed Zoom functions, meeting and facilitation protocols.

Panel: The Rural Clinician Perspective

Nicole Rice, NP – Rhinelander, WI

Dr. Megan Schaaf-Vander Zanden, MD – Cheyenne, WY

Dr. Ann Hansen, MD – Harlingen, TX

Charles Vickrey, NP – El Paso, TX

- Discussed panelist background including connections to, and experience with, rural clinicians and medically underserved communities
- Discussed the importance of telehealth in providing medical care to rural and medically underserved Veterans
- Discussed staff turnover challenges due to scheduling flexibility and pay gaps between VA and private sector facilities
- Highlighted recruitment, retention, and HR challenges within broader VA

Introduction to Afternoon Facilitated Discussions

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- Provided overview of facilitated discussion process to generate recommendations to VA Secretary.

Facilitated Discussions: Methodology and Application

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Explained brainstorm methodology tools and process for facilitated discussion.

Facilitated Discussion, Part 1 (Learnings From Spring 2022 Meeting)

Thomas Klobucar, Executive Director, Office of Rural Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Committee members engaged in rapid idea generation around the topics of staffing, recruitment and retention
- Committee engaged in discussion about emergent themes, expanding upon ideas and generating potential solutions to problems raised.

Facilitated Discussion, Part 2 (Planning for Fall 2022 Meeting)

Thomas Klobucar, Executive Director, Office of Rural Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Robert Derby, Strategic Planner, DCG Communications

- Committee expressed interest in further exploring academic and community partnerships as a strategy for provider recruitment
- Committee brainstormed strategies to streamline VA hiring and recruitment processes
- Committee used treatment tool to identify potential barriers or challenges to goals developed.

Wrap Up & Close

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- Chair thanked Committee members for their work and adjourned meeting.

Public Comment Period

Thomas Klobucar, Executive Director, Office of Rural Health, U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs

Deanna Lamb, Chair, Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee

- No public comments.



**Veterans Rural Health Advisory Committee Meeting Notes Signature Page
April 5-7, 2022**

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Deanna Lamb
Chair

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Thomas F. Klobucar, PhD
Designated Federal Officer